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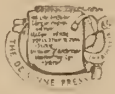

THE WRITERS OF KNICKERBOCKER NEW YORK

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BY

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ILLUSTRATIONS ENGRAVED BY
WALWORTH STILSON

THE GROLIER CLUB
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
1912

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THE WRITERS OF KNICKERBOCKER NEW YORK

KNICKERBOCKER NEW YORK

In these days, when New York has become a metropolitan city with a population of four million souls, and the old city has shrunk politically into the Borough of Manhattan, it is not easy to recall the obliterated outlines of the Town which was satirized by the viva-

cious young men who wrote the "Salmagundi" papers. Unlike Rome, which has been rebuilt half a dozen times on its early site and largely out of its old materials, so that the city of to-day is a kind of palimpsest in stone, brick, and mortar, New York has grown by the process of destruction, and has become metropolitan through successive stages of self-effacement. Here and there one comes upon a building which has survived from the late colonial period, but no structure now standing bears witness to the taste or lack of taste of the Dutch settlers, and the streets preserve no traces of the old lanes and highways save an occasional name as misleading descriptively as the Bowery. Canal Street is as stolid a reminiscence of a water-channel as is the heavy warehouse frontage of Grub Street of the humor-

ous or tragic traditions of literary Bohemia in the days of Mr. Pope and Dr. Johnson. New York has changed its form almost as often as, according to the physiologists, men change their bodies. It has kept certain characteristics which marked its youth and predicted the traits of its maturity; but its growth has been so great that the divergencies between the latest and the earliest city seem to be differences in kind rather than in degree.

The New York in which Washington Irving was born in April, 1783, was still in the possession of British troops, who withdrew six months later, leaving a half-ruined city behind them. The population had been reduced from twenty thousand to ten thousand; shipping had deserted the captive town, and the wharves were rotting from disuse;

streets which had been opened before the war to afford room for growth were desolate and forlorn, with that overgrowth of straggling weeds which is the final evidence of neglect. Many public and private buildings which had been used for military purposes were falling in ruins. The great fire of September, 1776, had left a large part of the western side of the little city a mass of ruins; and Broadway from Bowling Green to Trinity Church was a dreary waste of blackened walls and heaps of rubbish. There was no money in the city treasury, and the once growing town was apparently blighted. Other cities had been more active in the struggle for independence; none had suffered more severely from the devastation of war.

"In June, 1787," wrote Samuel Breck, "on my return from a residence

of a few years in France, I arrived at that city [New York] and found it a neglected place, built chiefly of wood, and in a state of prostration and decay. A dozen vessels in port; Broadway, from Trinity Church, inclusive, down to the Battery, in ruins, owing to a fire that had occurred when the city was occupied by the enemy during the later part of the war—the ruined walls of the houses standing on both sides of the way testifying to the poverty of the place five years after the conflagration; for although the war had ceased during that period, and the enemy had departed, no attempt had been made to rebuild them. In short, there was silence and inactivity everywhere." Mr. Breck was mistaken about the date of the fire, but his description of the desolate city was accurate.

In these depressing conditions, New York did not give itself up to gloomy misgivings; it had always been a cheerful, social community, and it was not long in recovering its prosperity and high spirits. Six years after the close of the war it was the Capital of the United States, the population had more than doubled, ships were in the harbor, grass no longer gave the streets a rustic aspect, and the tide of activity had reached the highest point in its history. There were nearly twenty-four thousand people living south of Reade Street on the west, and of Pike Street on the east; a swamp arrested the growth of the town along the East River. There were about twenty-four hundred slaves. The houses were mainly of English architecture, though peaked roofs and gable-ends to the

streets recalled the good old days of Dutch dominion, when a canal ran through Broad Street and broad-sterned Dutch vessels lay at anchor in the centre of the town.

Politics ran high, and during elections language was used with far less restraint than at present. The first man sent to Congress from New York under the recently adopted national Constitution was Mr. John Lawrence, and a letter published in the "Daily Advertiser" in March, 1789, contains the following frank statement: "Of all the men who framed that monarchical, aristocratical, oligarchical, tyrannical, diabolical system of slavery, the New Constitution, *One Half* were lawyers. Of the men who represented, or rather misrepresented, this city and county in the late convention of this State, to

whose wicked arts we may safely attribute the adoption of that diabolical system, *seven* out of the *nine* were lawyers. . . . And what crowns the wickedness of these wicked lawyers is, that a great majority of them throughout the State are violently opposed to our GOOD and GREAT HEAD and never-failing friend of the city and city interests, the present GOVERNOR.

"Beware, beware, beware of Lawyers!"

Very pleasant things were said about the New York of 1789 when, at the end of a three months' session of the United States Congress, it was announced that only one member had been ill. After commenting on its nearness to the ocean and the sweetening of its air by abundant verdure, a charming picture is evoked by the statement that the resi-

dents on the west side of Broadway are "saluted by fragrant odors from the apple orchards and buckwheat fields in blossom on the pleasant banks of the Jersey shore."

The little city was already charged with extravagance and frivolity, and the details of these offences are not lacking. One reads of blue satin gowns with white satin petticoats, large Italian gauze handkerchiefs with satin border stripes worn about the neck, completed by a head-dress of "pouf of gauze in the form of a globe, the headpiece of which was made of white satin having a double wing, in large plaits, and trimmed with a large wreath of artificial roses." There were shoes of blue satin adorned by rose-colored rosettes, and muffs of wolfskin with knots of scarlet ribbon. The gentlemen of the

period were arrayed with equal splendor: bottle-green, pearl, scarlet, purple, mulberry, and garnet were among the colors of cloths advertised by a local tailor on Hanover Square; while waistcoats fairly glowed with brilliant hues and brocaded and spangled buttons. Beaver and castor hats were in vogue, and superior boots were made by Mr. Thomas Garner, of Pearl Street, whose proud claim to the patronage of the fashionable was that he had worked for the first nobility in England. It cost approximately seventy-five dollars to dress a lady's hair every day in the year; and there were dentists who pulled the teeth of the poor *gratis* between the hours of six and nine on the mornings of Monday and Thursday. The sociability and hospitality of the city made a deep impression on Noah Webster, who was

also struck by the absence of affectation and of social snobbery.

Lectures appear to have been few in number and serious in theme; the city, which took its pleasures comfortably, took its opportunities of enlightenment sparingly and in a heroic temper. There appears to have been but one candidate on the lecture platform for public approval in this field during the winter of 1789, and he is described as "a man more than thirty years an Atheist." The lecture was delivered at Aaron Aorson's tavern, and tickets were to be had from the Aldermen!

The play enjoyed greater popular favor, but the John Street Theatre was without competition until 1798, when the Old Park Theatre was opened. During the season of 1789, William Dunlap put several home-made American dra-

mas on the stage. He was the prolific author of forty-nine plays, which stand to the credit of his industry if not of his genius. These dramas were the premature births of the Genius of the American stage, and none of them survives. They were very faint prophecies of the interesting dramatic movement now in progress; but one of them, "Darby's Return," achieved the rare distinction of evoking a laugh from Washington—an occurrence so unusual that it stimulated a writer in the "Daily Advertiser" to report it in the most stately English: "Our Adored Ruler seemed to unbend and for the moment give himself to the pleasures arising from the gratifications of the two most noble organs of sense, the Eye and the Ear!"

The Musical Society gave an occa-

sional recital, and there were subscription concerts under the management of local music-teachers. The young gentlemen at Columbia College were delivering Commencement orations "On the Progress and Causes of Civilization" and "On the Rising Glory of America." There were nine publishers and booksellers in the city, and in the year of Irving's birth one of them announced "The First American Novel" under the portentous title, "The Power of Sympathy; or, the Triumph of Nature." The Society Library, disrupted by the war, was re-established, and a circulating library organized. William Dunlap, the playwright, painted portraits and, later, became one of the founders of the National Academy of Design. Mr. Edward Savage and Mr. Joseph Wright followed the same profession, and Wash-

ington sat for all three. The city was kept informed of events by five newspapers; a magazine had been born prematurely and expired after a brief and unimportant life. The journalistic style of the day was of an eloquence that is happily illustrated by a description of one of the barges which escorted Washington on his voyage across the bay to New York to attend his inauguration: "The voices of the ladies were as much superior to the flutes that played with the stroke of the oars in Cleopatra's silken-corded barge, as the very superior and glorious water scene of New York bay exceeds the Cydnus in all its pride."

The two-story house in which Irving was born, at No. 131 William Street, about half-way between Fulton and John Streets, was pulled down ten years

before his death, and the house directly across the street, in which he spent his childhood, has shared its fate. The latter was larger and afforded greater facilities for boyish gymnastics. There were front and rear buildings with a narrow structure between which was hardly more than a passage, and it was from the sloping roof at the rear that Irving made his perilous descents when he set out to enjoy the forbidden pleasures of the John Street Theatre. George William Curtis tells a delightful story of a boy in Philadelphia, whose father, like the elder Irving, was of a very serious turn of mind, and who, by way of youthful reaction, secretly frequented the forbidden playhouse. "John," said the father, "is this dreadful thing true that I hear of thee? Hast thou been to see the play-actress

Frances Kemble?" "Yes, father." "I hope thee has not been more than once, John." "Yes, father," was the honest if somewhat discouraging answer; "more than thirty times."

The easy-going temper of the metropolis to which Irving was to give a lasting expression is still further indicated by the story that in order to escape the rigid requirements of his father's Presbyterian faith the boy had himself confirmed in Trinity Church. His temper was genial and kindly, and the mingled sentiment and humor which were to give his books a quality American writing had so far lacked, made him a loiterer and an observer rather than an arduous and methodical student. New York was the gateway to the beautiful country of Dutch settlement and tradition on the banks of the Hudson, and the gun and

fishing-rod were the instruments of exploration with which the boy who was to write "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle" carried his discoveries into the heart of a region in which it was always afternoon. He had read "Orlando Furioso" and had played the knight with great fire and gallantry in the back yard on John Street; he had surreptitiously saved candle-ends and read the moving adventures of Sindbad and Robinson Crusoe in forbidden places and at improper hours, and the thirst for travel was on him. He wandered about the pier-heads when he should have been poring over text-books, and watched lessening sails with eager desire to fare with them to the ends of the earth. He was, in a word, taking that course in romance, adventure, and dreaming which boys of his

temperament and genius have elected from the beginning of time, to the sore but fortunate disappointment of their elders. His brothers went through Columbia College, but he went up the Hudson and discovered to the imagination the river which Hudson had discovered to the eye. Diedrich Knickerbocker was last seen, it will be remembered, by the passengers in the stage for Albany!

The literary temperament in Irving was not without the confirmation of the literary impulse, and while he was still in his teens he began to try his hand at social satire, a form of literature which is practised only by men of city breeding and interest. In the "Morning Chronicle," of which his brother Peter was editor and proprietor, he published, in 1802, a series of short papers dealing

with the fashions and foibles of the town after the manner of the "Spectator" and "Tatler," and especially with the manners of the actors and their auditors. They were boyish performances, but they showed sensibility and humor, and a chivalrous attitude toward women. Irving's health, which had been uncertain, was established by a residence of two years in Europe, where he saw countries and peoples with infinite zest not only in the picturesque Old World but in the range and variety of character, the broad contrasts, the mingled tragedy and comedy of life in a more highly organized society. "I am a young man and in Paris," he wrote to a friend at home, and he was happy in a wholesome appetite for a more picturesque and vivid life than he had enjoyed in the little provincial city at the mouth

of the Hudson. When he returned in 1806 it was to find a group of companions whose knowledge of the great world was less than his, but who were equally ready for work or for mischief in a little provincial city which had developed what may be called a town-consciousness.

It was still bounded on the north by Anthony and Hester Streets; Greenwich Village, a pleasant suburban village through which Christopher Street now passes, was a place of refuge from the plague for families fleeing from the city; the State prison was there, and there were faint streets budding in the adjacent farms. Broome Street had been laid out; Astor Place and Greenwich Street, Mr. Jarvis tells us, were lanes; the latter had attained the dignity of a fashionable drive, and opulent

citizens drove out to Greenwich Village on pleasant afternoons, as to-day they motor to West Point or Peekskill! The seats of fashion were to be found on the Battery, which would have remained the most delightful locality for residence in New York if the people of the metropolis had not conceived a repugnance to living in near proximity to business quarters. Lower Broadway, Upper Pearl and Nassau Streets were of high respectability; and Broadway had been paved as far as the City Hall. Beyond lay charming country roads, occasional country houses to which the leading families retreated from the summer heat, and thrifty farms whose owners were happily ignorant of the enormous future values of their fields.

The American imagination, which has since built so many cities over night in

the newer sections of the country, did not slumber, however, even in a city in which Dutch reluctance to move faster than the fact was so large a factor, and a map made by Mangin in 1803 carries the Boston Road far north through a network of supposititious streets that lay across the broad fields owned by Mr. Bayard, Mr. Rutgers, Mr. Lispenard, Mr. De Peyster, and other well-known citizens, and obliterates as by magic the Swamp; the Collect, or fresh-water pond; and the salt meadows of the earlier maps.

The Collect was not, however, so easily dealt with. It was a marsh lying across the island from Roosevelt Slip to the Hudson at what is now the foot of Canal Street. The focal point of this marsh was a pond which found an outlet through the Swamp where leather

has had its shrine these many years, and whence the first Brooklyn Bridge takes its flight over the East River. The Swamp had been drained and the water from the pond flowed along the course of the present Canal Street; but the pond was still to be disposed of. It was very deep and it was proposed at one time to connect it with the two rivers by canals, which would have made New Amsterdam reminiscent of old Amsterdam; but it was finally filled in by leveling the high ground, and adventurous youths and maidens who had been accustomed, on pleasant afternoons, to venture into the country beyond the City Hall lost a convenient excuse for Sabbath-day excursions.

It is amusing to find a pleasure-garden bearing the Old World name of Ranelagh on the older maps; and Old

Vauxhall, which stood originally at the corner of Warren and Greenwich Streets in a house built by Sir Peter Warren, was also a public garden, patterned after its famous original in London and kept by Sam Fraunces, at one time a steward in the employ of Washington, and whose connection with the old tavern which still stands ensures his name a local immortality. Later this pleasure-ground covered the section between Broadway and the Bowery of which the Astor Library was the centre. The chief cattle-market was on the Bowery somewhat south of the garden. There were various road-houses along the East River where oysters and turtles were cooked with great skill. Fishing and water parties in summer and sleighing parties in winter found the best of fare in these houses, with their pleasant

grounds. It was the day of the old-fashioned chaise, and there was a bridge on the Boston Post Road at about Third Avenue and Seventy-seventh Street which bore the suggestive name of the Kissing-bridge. The exaction of this kind of toll appears to have been widely practised; not only bridges but gates and stiles were penalized for women. The Rev. Mr. Burnaby sagely observed that this custom was "curious, yet not displeasing." New York had spread out since Irving's birth, but it was still a neighborly little city, of a social turn and disposed to make easy terms with life.

In 1809 Thomas Paine had just died in Greenwich Village, at what is now No. 293 Bleecker Street, where he was often to be seen at the open window reading, with his book in close proxim-

ity to a decanter of what appeared to be brandy or rum. It is reported that two clergymen who visited him with the hope of changing his attitude toward Christianity were abruptly dismissed and the housekeeper received orders to bar the door against such visitors. "If God does not change his mind, I 'm sure no human can," was her sage comment, and the author of "The Age of Reason" was troubled no more.

After a stormy passage of sixty-four days, not lacking in serious perils, Irving landed in New York in the wake of a heavy snowstorm in February, 1806, in high spirits and ready for such pleasures as the little town afforded. One of his biographers has described it as a "handy" city; it was large enough to furnish ample variety of character studies and many opportunities for good-fellowship of an intimate, easy-going sort; there was an air of conviviality about the place, but there was

little serious dissipation. It was a very pleasant moment in the growth of the metropolis which had become, in a quiet, provincial way, a town in the special sense in which that word connotes a group of people numerous enough to constitute a society, fond of the same pleasures, interested in local incidents and amusements, sufficiently intimate to have formed a code of social standards and manners. In a word, in the New York of Irving's early maturity, as in the London of the time of Steele and Addison, there was an organized society, open to clever portraiture and brisk satire; supplying at the same time the material and the audience for local wit and humor. It was easy to know everybody in the society of the town, and easy to get about the place. The tone was not intellectual, though

the city never lacked men and women of distinguished ability and social cultivation. It was a well-bred and hospitable society, with a keen relish for pleasure. There were numberless dinners and suppers, much less costly and elaborate than those of to-day, and more informal and merry. The country was convivial in all sections outside New England, and the social use of wine was over-generous. In America, as in England, getting under the table was an indiscretion, not a fault. One of Irving's friends reported that, after a festive occasion, he had fallen through an open grating on his homeward way and was disposed to feel very much depressed by the darkness and solitude; but, one after another, several fellow-guests joined him in the same manner, and the hilarity was prolonged until dawn.

Like many other young men whose ultimate good or evil fortune it was to write books, Irving was admitted to the bar at about the same time that the sign, "William Cullen Bryant, attorney and counsellor at Law," appeared in the little village of Cummington in western Massachusetts. In after years his estimate of his legal acquirements was indicated by his quoting the comments of two well-known lawyers who were examining students for admission to practise law. "Martin," said one of these examiners, referring to an aspirant who had acquitted himself very lamely—"Martin, I think he knows a *little* law." "Make it stronger," was the reply; "damned little." Irving had loitered and dreamed on the water-front as a boy when he ought to have been at his books; and now, at the gateway of his

career, the literary temperament turned him toward congenial fellowship rather than arduous study. There was plenty of material for comradeship in the town, and young men of spirit instinctively gathered about him. It was a very kindly and wholesome Bohemia in which they disported themselves in the halcyon days of a fleeting youth. They regarded themselves as "men about town" of the deepest dye, but it was a very innocent town in which they amused themselves, and they all bore honorable names in later and more serious years.

Henry Ogden, Henry Brevoort, James K. Paulding, John and Gouverneur Kemble, Peter and Washington Irving, the leaders of this vivacious company, were members of families who had long been foremost in the social life of the city, and they were far from

being the "roistering blades" they fondly thought themselves to be. They were young men of spirit, generous tastes, and no little cultivation. They combined with great success devotion to literature and social activity. Irving speaks of himself as "a champion at the tea-parties," and the "nine worthies," or "lads of Kilkenny," as he called them, shone in the society of what was then known as "the gentler sex" no less than on the festive occasions when they celebrated their youth in private revels. The old country house built by Nicholas Gouverneur, from whom it had descended to Gouverneur Kemble, was the favorite out-of-town haunt of these lively youths. It had a pleasant site on the banks of the Passaic not far from Newark, and is celebrated in the "Salmagundi" papers as Cockloft Hall. An

old-time air hung about the place, with its antique furniture and generous endowment of family portraits. It was cared for by two old servants of long standing in the family, and a negro boy, and it afforded a well-set stage for the lively comedy which these vivacious youths made of life in the golden hour of coming into the heritage of youth and pleasure and Letters. "Who would have thought," wrote Irving in his sixty-seventh year to the owner of the old Hall, "that we should ever have lived to be two such respectable old gentlemen?", and many years after the curtain had fallen on the gaiety and fun of those hilarious days, Peter Irving often recalled the Saturdays at the Hall, when "we sported on the lawn until fatigued, and sometimes fell sociably into a general nap in the drawing-room in the

dusk of the evening." In town the "lads of Kilkenny" often assembled at Dyde's, a tavern of good standing in Park Row; a convenient place for after-theatre suppers.

To riot at Dyde's on imperial champagne,
And then scour our city—the peace to maintain,

was an occupation which these gentlemen pursued with great success. When the financial resources of the revelers ran low they reduced the scale of expenditure by resorting to an unpretentious porter-house at the corner of Nassau and John Streets, not far from the theatre, where they indulged in what they depreciatingly called "Blackguard Suppers." The modern misogynist habit of living in clubs and associating with one sex only had not come into vogue in those sociable and informal days, and the young men who formed

the Knickerbocker group were on good terms with the belles of the day, and appear to have been much in evidence at social functions. Irving asked Henry Ogden, who had sailed for China, to "pick up two or three queer little pretty things that would cost nothing and be acceptable to the girls," and there are hints of a Chinese supper later.

The first number of "Salmagundi," the initial work of the so-called Knickerbocker School, was published on January 24, 1807, preceded by some clever and mystifying announcements in the "Evening Post." It appeared fortnightly through the year, and came to an untimely end in January, 1808, not because its popularity was waning, but because its publisher was disposed to deal in an arbitrary fashion with its high-spirited editors. The idea of a

periodical which would deal freely and frankly, in a satiric or humorous spirit, with the fashions and foibles of the town originated with Irving, who secured his brother William and his friend James K. Paulding as associates in what turned out to be a more extended and elaborate frolic than they had hitherto planned. They proposed to amuse themselves with the town, and they succeeded for a year in keeping the little city on tip-toe expectation, not unmixed with apprehension; for "Salmagundi," while entirely free from personalities and scandal, was keen in its comments on manners and local social standards. It was written in the manner of the "Spectator"; but New York did not furnish the varied and brilliant material which London offered Steele and Addison, and the Irvings and Paulding

lacked the sophisticated charm, the intimate and adroit skill of their predecessors. They were, moreover, very young apprentices, and must not be judged by the standards set by the masters of the art, whose comments on passing fashions have become contributions to literature. The banter was somewhat heavy-handed and the humor gave little promise of the lightness of Irving's later manner, or of the clear-cut and nimble wit of Lowell and Holmes. It bore the stamp of a provincial society and was rollicking and hilarious rather than keen and pungent.

Irving had no illusions about its quality. The "North American Review," however, described "Salmagundi" as a production of extraordinary merit. Eleven years after the last number appeared, Irving wrote to Brevoort that,

while it was pardonable as a youthful production, it was full of errors, puerilities, and imperfections; and in a letter to Irving, Paulding said: "I know you consider old Sal. a sort of saucy, flippant trollope belonging to nobody and not worth fathering." "Salmagundi" had the crudity of youth, but it also had its high spirits, its gaiety, and its audacious confidence in its own opinions. It was frolicsome and joyous and not devoid of literary grace and skill, and will remain the happiest contemporary record of old New York.

The old Government House, which had been built for the President of the United States, faced Bowling Green when "Salmagundi" published the chapter entitled "A Tour in Broadway." This building passed through a period of great distinction as the resi-

dence of Governor George Clinton and of Chief Justice Jay, and then lost prestige as the local post-office. In its cellar were stored the statues of gods and goddesses belonging to the homeless Academy of Arts. The lead statue of George the Third, which formerly stood on Bowling Green, had been pulled down and run into bullets to be aimed at his Majesty's troops, and the Green had been put to bucolic uses as a pasturage for cows. Cortlandt Street corner was a famous vantage-ground from which to see the belles go by in pleasant weather, on shopping bent. The City Hall, according to "Salmagundi," was a resort for young lawyers, not because they had business there, but because they had no business anywhere else.

There was an advanced wing of society which practised the latest arts of

pleasure imported from the Old World. The great god Style already had its votaries, and then, as now, many were the sacrifices of good taste and refined manners offered at its painted pasteboard shrine. "Salmagundi" found a rich yield of satire in the imitative instinct which shaped many of the customs and social habits of the hour. It informs us that

Style, that with pride each empty bosom swells,
Puffs boys to manhood, little girls to belles.

The waltz was a novelty in those days, and "Salmagundi" "views with alarm" its introduction into the social life of the town:

Scarce from the nursery freed, our gentle fair
Are yielded to the dancing-master's care;
And, ere the head one mite of sense can gain,
Are introduced 'mid folly's frippery train.
A stranger's grasp no longer gives alarms,

Our fair surrender to their very arms,
And in the insidious waltz will swim and twine,
And whirl and languish tenderly divine!
O, how I hate this loving, hugging dance;
This imp of Germany brought up in France!

. . . . . .

Let France its whim, its sparkling wit supply,
The easy grace that captivates the eye;
But curse their waltz,—their loose, lascivious arts
That smooth our manners to corrupt our hearts!

In the novel and play of the time "Salmagundi" found still more alarming evidences of a decline in morals and manners:

Where now those books, from which in days of yore
Our mothers gained their literary store?
Alas! stiff-skirted Grandison gives place
To novels of a new and rakish race;
And honest Bunyan's pious, dreaming lore,
To the lascivious rhapsodies of Moore.
And, last of all, behold the mimic stage
Its morals lend to polish off the age,
With flimsy farce, a comedy miscall'd,
Garnished with vulgar cant, and proverbs bald,

With puns most puny, and a plenteous store
Of smutty jokes, to catch a gallery roar.
Or see, more fatal, graced with every art
To charm and captivate the female heart,
The false, "the gallant, gay Lothario" smiles,
And loudly boasts his base seductive wiles—
In glowing colors paints Calista's wrongs,
And with voluptuous scenes the tale prolongs.

The stage of social development at which the town had arrived is indicated by the words "female heart." Its old-fashioned virtue, assailed by "Lalla Rookh" and "The Penitents," had, fortunately, no premonitions that its infancy in the dramatization of vice was to pass into the full and voluptuous maturity of these later days of the play of passion without a shred to its back.

"Salmagundi" had made the town smile, but "A History of New York" was so broad in its mock-heroic treat-

ment of the local forefathers that it gave grievous offence to those members of the early Dutch families who lacked the sense of humor. An old gentleman who died twenty years ago once said to the writer of these lines, with perfect gravity, that Mr. Irving once confessed to him that the history was not entirely accurate! It appeared just before Christmas in 1809, preceded by cunningly devised hints and intimations in the form of letters, asking for information about a certain old gentleman who bore the name of Knickerbocker, who was last seen resting himself near Kingsbridge by the passengers in the Albany stage. He had a small bundle tied in a red bandana handkerchief in his hands, and appeared to be very much fatigued. Ten days passed without news of the whereabouts of this weary old gentle-

man, when it was announced that a book in his handwriting had been discovered in his room and would be disposed of to pay the arrears of his board and lodging!

The town became immensely interested, and when the History appeared it was eagerly read, laughed over, and denounced. Never was a book more cleverly announced even in this day, when advertising has become an art based on a deep study of the psychology of the crowd and the effect on the human mind of rhythmical recurrence, at short intervals, of skilfully phrased testimonials from eminent persons to the superiority of certain articles without which it is impossible to live. There were eighty thousand people in New York, and the society folk who constituted the "town" in the technical sense

of the word were a comparatively small and homogeneous group, many of whom were of Dutch descent and bore names long honored in the city and now inscribed on the signs on the corners of the streets. The History, originally projected as a satire on a solemn and heavy-handed "Picture of New York" which had recently appeared, had widened its scope, and, like "The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews," which started out to be a travesty on Richardson's "Pamela," took on the dimensions of an original contribution to literature. The dedication "To the New York Historical Society" struck the key-note of its burlesque gravity of manner and its audacious and rollicking fun. Its appearance was the signal for a blaze of wrath accompanied by a peal of laughter from

New York to Albany. Mrs. Hoffman wrote to Irving, referring to one of his friends who was a social leader: "Your good friend, the old lady, came home in a great stew this evening. Such a scandalous story had got about town—a book had come out called a 'History of New York'; nothing but a satire and ridicule of the old Dutch people—and they said you was the author; but from this foul slander, I 'll venture to say, she has defended you. She was quite in a heat about it."

Ten years later, when its obvious burlesque intention ought to have filtered into the most solemn-minded, it was described by an eminent citizen of Dutch descent as "a coarse caricature." Its humor was not lost, however, by a host of people in the town and elsewhere. "If it is true, as Sterne says," wrote a

correspondent in a Baltimore newspaper, "that a man draws a nail out of his coffin every time he laughs, after reading Irving's book your coffin will fall to pieces." Walter Scott wrote to Irving's friend Henry Brevoort: "Looking at the simple and obvious meaning only, I have never read anything so closely resembling the style of Dean Swift as the annals of Diedrich Knickerbocker. I have employed these few evenings in reading them aloud to Mrs. S. and two ladies who are our guests, and our sides have been absolutely sore with laughing."

This audacious burlesque of the early history of the city and of its men of local fame and Dutch descent was the initial volume in American literature, the first book of what used to be called *belles-lettres* published in this country,

the first piece of American writing of literary quality which caught the attention of Europe. It also created the Knickerbocker Legend, and gave the earliest group of writers in New York a descriptive name. Diedrich Knickerbocker has long been the impersonation of old New York, and, with Rip Van Winkle and Brom Bones, forms the central group in our New World mythology; and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," "Rip Van Winkle," and the old-fashioned gentleman who was last seen on the Albany Post Road constitute our chief group of legendary characters and are all the creations of Irving's imagination. While descriptions of the scenery and peoples of the New World had been written south of Manhattan Island and theological treatises abounded in New England, it was sig-

nificant of the metropolitan spirit of New York that its earliest writers, who were also the earliest writers of literary spirit and purpose in the country, were men of humor and urbanity, and on easy terms with life.

Two years after the publication of "A History of New York," Irving was living at No. 16 Broadway, near Bowling Green, with his friend Henry Brevoort. He had made various journeys to Albany and Washington by the tedious methods of travel in use at the time, and his letters showed conditions in political life which differed from those prevailing to-day chiefly in being more sordid and unscrupulous. The coterie who were to become known as the

Knickerbocker group had become a little less boisterous in their convivialities, but not less persuaded that literature and jovial good-fellowship throve well together. They were often at the Hall on the Passaic or at the home of Captain Phillips in the Highlands of the Hudson, where spacious mansions and large estates had multiplied; and there were houses in town, like Mrs. Renwick's, where these gay young men were at ease.

On the 25th of May, 1815, Irving sailed for Liverpool, and did not set foot on Manhattan Island again until 1832. He had given New York the Knickerbocker tradition, made the first important contribution to *belles-lettres* in this country, and conferred on the metropolis the distinction of being the birthplace of American literature.

Between the publication of "Salmagundi" in 1807 and Irving's return from Europe in 1832, the group of young men who belonged to his coterie and who formed the Knickerbocker group had their golden age of easy conditions so far as absence of competition was concerned. Long afterward Irving said to George William Curtis: "You young literary fellows to-day have a harder time than we old fellows had. You trip over each other's heels; there are so many of you. We had it all our own way. But the account is square, for you can make as much by a lecture as we made by a book." The "town" lasted well on into the Thirties, but it was no longer the undisturbed provincial city. Cooper, Bryant, Willis, and Poe had become residents, and there was a further progression toward cosmopolitan-

ism. Moreover, the city was fast outgrowing its old-time metes and bounds, and complaints about the distances between sections and lamentations for the passing of "the good old times" began to be heard. While Irving was industriously transcribing the half-forgotten background of ripe landscape and ancient custom in the Old World and winning a reputation of the most enviable kind, the rollicking friends who had been young together were passing into maturity and making the most of the morning hours of reputation and position.

No more interesting face was seen in the streets of New York in the days of Irving's long expatriation than that of James Kirke Paulding. The regular and clear-cut features, the smiling but penetrating eyes, the compact, well-

poised head with its mass of hair worn with the picturesque carelessness of nature, gave him a look of distinction. He was a very companionable man, and there was no suggestion of the precision and preoccupation of the man of affairs about Paulding; his convictions were deep-set and never kept in the background if there was occasion for their expression; but, like all companionable men, he knew how to find common ground with a friend ample enough for the freest interchange of jest and idea. He was of colonial stock, as were all the men of his craft in New York. For many years before the Revolution the Pauldings had lived in Tarrytown, which is intimately associated with the Knickerbocker tradition; but that lovely shore of the Hudson was open to the ravages of both armies during the war,

and the family removed to Dutchess County. This county lies north of Westchester, and both have fed New York with men of distinction. Dutchess claims to have been the mother of beautiful women as well, one of them of such surpassing loveliness that the Czar of Russia of that day pronounced her the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. The poet's father was active in the American cause, and his cousin John was one of the captors of Major André. His boyhood was so ravaged by the uncertainties and hardships of war that he said later that he never wished to be young again.

He was in his nineteenth year when he came to New York, and, through his acquaintance with William Irving, met the group of young men who were making a business of pleasure and a recrea-

tion of literature. He and Washington Irving were soon fast friends, and the first number of "Salmagundi" was their joint production. Paulding, like Cooper, became involved later in controversies which gave sharp point to his pen, but in "Salmagundi" he shared with Irving the gaiety of spirit and urbanity of manner which made the keen satire of that quick-witted journal entertaining even to its victims. Duyckinck was of opinion that the papers in Oriental guise were from Paulding's hand, and that he wrote many of the best descriptive passages; and characterized his style as stamped by feeling, observation, friendly truth, and genial sympathy. He was one of the first to state forcibly the American case in the long and at times acrimonious interchange of criticism between this country and England, and

"The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan" was so keen a piece of satire, but so free from malice, that it was reprinted in England. A later satire in the form of a parody on the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" made such stinging comment on the British raids on Chesapeake Bay as to be thought worthy of the attention of the "Quarterly Review," an adept in the heavy-handed castigation in vogue at that time. A retort to the strictures of the "Quarterly Review" soon followed in pamphlet form, and raided English morals and manners with such effectiveness that it caught the attention of President Madison.

In 1816 Paulding traveled in Virginia and wrote one of the earliest of those local studies which record the interstate commerce of observation and

criticism for which this country supplies such abundant material. The spirited and frank retorts to the somewhat oppressive "condescension of foreigners" had made Paulding known to the country at large, but when "The Backwoodsman" appeared in 1818 its elaborate and very formal heroics, descriptive of the fortunes of an emigrant who made the perilous change from the Hudson to the frontier, found the same scanty measure of favor now generally extended to narrative poems. The poem enjoyed a distinction, however, at that time very rare: it was translated into French. Paulding's friend and contemporary has left a somewhat enigmatic comment on this original American production:

Homer was well enough; but would he ever
Have written, think you, "The Backwoodsman"?
Never!

If these lines had fallen under the eye of Matthew Arnold we should have had another light-handed international amenity to contribute to the joy of both nations.

When Paulding tried to recall the atmosphere and tone of "Salmagundi" in 1819, it was soon evident that the "town" of the early Knickerbocker had merged into a larger community, and much of the wit went wide of the mark. Paulding, meanwhile, had entered public service and was living in Washington. In 1823 he published his first novel, "Koningsmarke," a study of life among the Swedish settlers on the banks of the Delaware. But the satirical impulse was strong in him, and the title of his next book, "John Bull in America; or, the New Münchausen," is sufficiently descriptive to make further comment un-

necessary; while "The Merry Tales of the Three Wise Men of Gotham," which appeared a year later, touched somewhat caustically the new social doctrine of Robert Dale Owen, the rising science of phrenology, and other matters of interest at the moment. His aptness for satire was braced in Paulding by a lively dislike for the heavy contemptuousness of manner of some Englishmen of the time, and the abundant material furnished by some of these candid friends led him again to enter the field with one of the keenest of his satires, "The Mirror for Travelers," a burlesque guidebook and record of travel in this country, in a cleverly imitated British manner.

In this satiric view Paulding was a true child of the Knickerbocker spirit, and his next books, "Tales of the Good

Woman" and "Chronicles of the City of Gotham," purported to be translations of legends of early New York. A Mrs. Grant, who had written pleasantly of the old Dutch settlers, furnished material for "The Dutchman's Fireside"; a story which so greatly pleased the readers of the day that it went promptly through six editions and was republished in England, France, and Holland. In Washington, as in New York, Paulding was a thoroughgoing Knickerbocker; but he had an eye for manners and great zest for the pleasures of hospitality, and his account of Virginia was followed, the year after the appearance of the Dutch novel, by "Westward Ho!", a story that, moving with the southern flow of emigration, began in Virginia and was worked out in Kentucky. Paulding was charmed by the

plantation life, the generous hospitality, and the winning Southern temperament, and in 1836, when the tide of feeling in the country was rising, wrote an uncompromising defence of slavery, an institution with which he was not unfamiliar in his own State, where it was not abolished until 1799. In 1837 Paulding entered the cabinet of a Knickerbocker President, Van Buren, as Secretary of the Navy.

On retiring from office, Paulding found a delightful home overlooking the Hudson, not far from Poughkeepsie, within sight of many of the localities endeared by early associations and ancient Dutch traditions. There he practised the arts of agriculture and of writing with growing content. He was as busy within doors as without, and his pen

was driven as regularly as his plough. A story of the Revolutionary period, and, later, a novel laid partly in this country and partly in England, and an American comedy, "The Bucktails; or, The Americans in England," were fruits of this well-ordered leisure. Five years later he gave this very comfortable picture of his manner of life:

"I smoke a little, read a little, write a little, ruminate a little, grumble a little, and sleep a great deal. I was once great at pulling up weeds, to which I have a mortal antipathy, especially bull's-eyes, wild carrots, and toad-flax, *alias* butter-and-eggs. But my working days are almost over. I find that carrying seventy-five years on my shoulders is pretty nearly equal to the same number of pounds; and instead of labouring my-

self, I sit in the shade watching the labours of others, which I find quite sufficient exercise."

Sitting pipe in mouth on his veranda overlooking the river, watching the harvesters and the haze on the Catskills on those autumn afternoons when Rip Van Winkle's slumbers were deepest, the old man delighted to recall the golden Knickerbocker age before the "town" had been lost in the metropolis, to tell the brave story of the youth of the Knickerbocker group, to draw the portraits of the great men he had seen in Washington, to castigate John Bull with passionate eloquence whenever occasion arose, and to chant the elegy of age on the good old times of the patriots and demigods. A sturdy man, of deep convictions and passionate feelings, Paulding shared Irving's sense of hu-

mor, high spirits, and gift for satire; but, while Irving saw the Old World with sympathetic eyes and reknit the severed ties between the young and the old country, Paulding remained a provincial in experience and feeling; loyal, prejudiced, partisan; a man of a city, but not a man of the world.

THE last stages of the Knickerbocker age began when Fitz-Greene Halleck appeared on the scene. He was not to the manner born; he came from Guilford, Connecticut; but he felt the Knickerbocker spirit and shared its achievements. Born in one of the loveliest of the old New England villages, whose distinction was invariably expressed in a green or common, a Congregational spire, an academy, and rows

of graceful elms, Halleck brought to New York, in 1811, a good school training and skill in bookkeeping gained in that forerunner of the modern department store, the country store. The laughter which greeted the appearance of the "Salmagundi" papers was a thing of the past, and the anger which met Diedrich Knickerbocker's story of his ancestors had lost its heat; the merry youths who gathered at Cockloft Hall had blown the foam off the wine of life, though they had not lost their zest in the mere act of living; Irving was boarding on lower Broadway with Brevoort as a roommate, and there was plenty of good talk but very little work done.

Halleck made a very quiet entrance into the city which was later to honor him with one of the few statues commemorate of its Men of Letters. He

was a born accountant, and during his long residence in New York he served two men in this capacity—Mr. Jacob Barker and Mr. John Jacob Astor. Mr. Astor, at his death in 1848, left him an annuity large enough in those days of moderate prices to enable him to retire to his native town and enjoy ease of condition and industrious leisure in a fine old colonial house which had some associations with Shelley's adventurous grandfather.

Halleck did not find his way into the Knickerbocker group at the start, but he early made acquaintance with Joseph Rodman Drake and the two became ardent friends. Drake was a young man of captivating personality; variously gifted and brilliant; a thoroughbred in his sense of honor and a certain gallant rectitude and courage; a man of charm-

ing fancy, who, at the age of five, was writing clever verse. By descent he was an American of the Americans, if we accept the dictum of Richard Grant White that to be an American one must have come of ancestors who arrived in this country before the War of the Revolution. Drake had an ancestor in the Plymouth Company, and his father held a colonelcy in Washington's army. His mother was equally well-born in the true sense of the word. His childhood was overshadowed by the death of both his parents and the bitterness of poverty; but the boy was of a chivalrous spirit and faced hard conditions with a resolution which was an assurance of success. His active fancy opened a door of escape from these conditions, and he played many romantic parts in the drama of his bleak boyhood. He was

an omnivorous reader, his memory let nothing escape, and despite his lack of opportunity he became exceptionally well informed. His facility in verse-writing, so early developed, grew with his years; and his endeavor to make a man of business of himself failed utterly.

Drake was eighteen and Halleck twenty-three when, on a sailing party in the bay, they met James De Kay, a young medical student. The day was genial, youth was at the prow and also at the helm, and Halleck remarked that "it would be heaven to lounge upon the rainbow and read Tom Campbell." It requires some effort of the imagination to recall Campbell's popularity at that time and to revive the state of mind which could see in him a possible relation with the rainbow; but in youth and

fair weather all things tremble on the verge of poetry. Literature was still in the future for the ardent youths, but life was within easy reach, and especially the pleasant social life of a small city. In this same year Irving was beginning to look upon the quiet pleasures of New York with the jaundiced eye of a veteran man of the world upon whom the weight of twenty-nine years bore heavily. Writing of a certain vivacious young woman who played "the sparkler," he said: "God defend me from such vivacity as hers in future—such smart speeches without meaning; such bubble-and-squeak nonsense. I 'd as lieve stand by a frying-pan for an hour and listen to the cooking of apple fritters"; and he reports that when he was out of the house he did not stop running for a mile. He speaks irreverently of the "divinities

and blossoms" of the hour, of "rascally little tea parties," and protests that he is weary of the "tedious commonplaces of fashionable society."

The two young poets, hidden in an obscurity which they found very pleasant, were probably in great awe of the brilliant young Knickerbocker who had dared to ridicule the town, and who, in the glory of his local fame, was eager for fresh fields and a wider horizon. They found very excellent company and much pleasant talk in the city, and they hunted the joys of youth together. Halleck described Drake at this time as "perhaps the handsomest man in New York—a face like an angel, a form like an Apollo." Music was one of the accomplishments of Drake, and he played the flute at a time when that instrument and the harp were the symbols of social

cultivation. One of their hostesses was Mrs. Peter Stuyvesant, whose spacious house, not far from the square which bears her name, with its gardens and lawn stretching to the East River, was a centre of social activity. The city ended at Canal Street, and a visit in the vicinity of old St. Mark's was like going to Tarrytown or Trenton in these swift-footed days. Mrs. Stuyvesant declared, when First Avenue was laid out and this earliest intrusion into the privacy of a great colonial estate made, that her heart was broken. A pear-tree which stood long at the corner of Third Avenue and Thirteenth Street was for many decades the only surviving relic of this hospitable home.

The country house of Mr. Henry Eckford was a kind of second home to the young poets, though its distance

from the city was a test of their enjoyment of its hospitality. It stood in a pine grove on Love Lane where Twenty-first Street crosses Sixth Avenue! New York was surrounded by spacious country places, not only on the upper part of the island, but across the three rivers. Among these sylvan homes was that of the well-known Hunt family, on the Long Island shore almost opposite West Farms, to which Halleck and Drake made their way by stage and small boat, and where they often found delightful companionship over Sunday. On these occasions Halleck gave himself up to the pleasures of "female society," but Drake went a-fishing in his old clothes. In the evening the two friends appeared in different rôles: Halleck told stories and recited verse, and Drake sang.

Drake had studied medicine and embarked in the business of selling drugs at one of the corners of Park Row, and there is a tradition that in this building, which was both a dwelling and a shop, the second series of satirical papers on the town, "The Croakers," was conceived and brought forth. These lively satires, which took the town by storm, were in verse of varying degrees of wit and melody. They were clever skits on men and manners, many of them burlesques, and appeared first in the columns of the "Evening Post," over the signature "Croakers," adapted from "The Good-Natured Man." This was in March, 1819, and thenceforth "Croakers" appeared at short intervals and speedily became the topic of the town. The poets and Coleman, the editor of the "Evening Post," adroitly concealed

the authorship of the poems, and great was the speculation on that subject. So great was the wincing and shrinking at "The Croakers," that every person was on tenterhooks; "neither knavery nor folly has slept quietly since our first commencement," wrote one of the two poets in a mood of pardonable elation. Poor Coleman was almost submerged by the flood of imitations called out by the brilliant success of the series. Conceived in the spirit of mischief, these facile and fetching rhymes have preserved the humors of the hour, and, with "Salmagundi," are entertaining chapters in the history of the decade between 1819 and 1829.

General Wilson recalls a remark of Drake's which explains the lightness and fun of these satirical and burlesque pieces. The young poet had just cor-

rected the proof of some lines he had recently written, when he turned a glowing face to his collaborator and cried out: "Oh, Halleck, is n't this happiness!" Halleck may be pardoned for writing to his sister: "We have tasted all the pleasures and many of the pains of literary fame and notoriety under the assumed name of 'The Croakers'; we have had the consolation of seeing and hearing ourselves praised, puffed, eulogized, execrated, and threatened as much, I believe I can say with truth, as any writers since the days of Junius. The whole town has talked of nothing else for three weeks past, and every newspaper has done us the honour to mention us in some way, either of praise or censure, but all uniting in owning our talents and genius."

The poets, meanwhile, were working

individually as well as collectively. In 1819, while the town was still talking about "The Croakers," "The Culprit Fay," written in August, 1816, was gaining a wide reputation for Drake, and there were many who hailed him as the coming poet. It was a charming flight of fancy, delicately poised in mid-air, and kept aloft with that ease which is born of native gift and skill in versification. The story runs that Cooper and Halleck, in a warm discussion of the romantic associations of the Scotch lakes and streams and their rich contributions to poetry, declared that American rivers offered no such material to the poet. Drake not only ardently espoused the cause of the American rivers, but in three days' time re-enforced his argument by writing "The Culprit Fay," with the Highlands of the Hud-

son as a background, but bringing in impressions received on the shore of Long Island Sound; frankly confessing his departure from poetic realism in an ingeniously worded note: "The reader will find some of the inhabitants of salt water a little further up the Hudson than they usually travel, but not too far for the purposes of poetry."

In May, 1819, Drake wrote his popular song, "The American Flag," which appeared first in the columns of the "Evening Post," with very warm commendation from the editor: "Sir Philip Sidney said, as Addison tells us, that he could never read the old ballad of 'Chevy Chase' without feeling his heart beat within him as at the sound of a trumpet. The following lines, which are to be ranked among the highest inspirations of the Muse, will suggest

similar associations in the breast of the gallant American officer." The praise was a little too ardent, but what the song lacked in poetic quality it made up in the ardor of its patriotism, and it has passed, through the school-books, into the minds of many generations of American boys, and has been proudly declaimed on many platforms. It ought to be remembered that Halleck wrote the closing lines:

Forever float that standard sheet!
Where breathes the foe but falls before us,
With Freedom's soil beneath our feet,
And Freedom's banner streaming o'er us.

One of the prominent preachers of the town at that time was the Rev. Dr. Samuel H. Cox, a Presbyterian of unadulterated Calvinistic views and the author of the well-known hymn beginning:

We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand and awful time,
In an age on ages telling,
To be living is sublime.

The free poetic temperament of the two poets revolted at the rigid doctrines powerfully and dogmatically expounded by Dr. Cox, and they amused themselves by delivering sermons of a very different theology to a very small but highly appreciative audience of two intimate friends. Unfortunately, these productions, which would have made a highly original contribution to sermonic literature, have not been preserved.

The friendship of Halleck and Drake, compounded of love and laughter, of work and wit, was severed by the death of Drake in September, 1820. There is no more winning and unworldly chapter in the story of New York than the gen-

erous and loyal comradeship of these two young men, who, like Irving and Paulding, conspired against the dullness of the town and made it smile at its own follies. Neither poet had genius, but both had talent; and Drake, like Hamilton, belongs to the group of men of brilliancy and personal charm whose presence has given distinction to New York in every decade since it was founded.

Halleck had written "Fanny" in 1819, a satirical poem which dealt with contemporary manners and men with a freedom that stopped short of impertinence, but afforded much amusement to all save the solemn-minded. The poem passed through several editions and carried Halleck's reputation to distant parts of the country. A visit in Europe gave the young poet themes like

"Burns" and "Alnwick Castle" and "Marco Bozzaris," which he treated with spirit and metrical effectiveness. Few boys have grown up in America since 1827 who have not heard of the Turk who dreamed in his guarded tent of the hour when Greece, "her knee in suppliance bent, should tremble at his power." Perhaps no song written in this country has had wider currency than this spirited lyric, born at a time when the Greek struggle for independence appealed to the imagination of the world. In 1848, when his service in the office of John Jacob Astor was terminated by the death of that adventurous capitalist, with whom Irving had also had very pleasant relations, Halleck went back to Guilford and spent nineteen peaceful years in a house which bore the impress of colonial taste in its

dignity and spaciousness. He had comfortable means and the leisure so dear to a man of literary taste and habit; but he never lost his love for the city which had given him such wealth of friendship. "I shall never cease to 'hail,' as the sailors say, from your good city of New York, of which a residence of more than fifty years made me a citizen," he wrote to an admirer who wished to reproduce a view of his home in Guilford. "There I always considered myself at home, and elsewhere but a visitor. If, therefore, you wish to embellish my poem ('Fanny') with a view of my country-seat (it was literally mine every Sunday for years), let it be taken from the top of Weehawk Hill, overlooking New York, to whose scenes and associations the poem is almost exclusively devoted."

Halleck died at Guilford, November 19, 1867, and has been commemorated by substantial memorials both there and in New York. A granite pillar was dedicated to his memory in his native town, in the presence of a great multitude, Bayard Taylor delivering the address and Dr. Holmes contributing one of his happy occasional poems. In May, 1877, a bronze statue of Halleck was unveiled in Central Park by the President of the United States. Bryant, the head of the guild of American poets, and William Allen Butler, the accomplished and versatile author of "Nothing to Wear," delivered addresses, and a poem by Whittier was read.

Poets of far greater genius than Halleck have been far less adequately honored than he; for he was the poet of a half-century and of a city, not of an

age and a nation. But he lived in a fortunate time; he was singularly happy in his associations; and he was a delightful companion, genial and witty, scornful and satirical only in dealing with impostors and pretenders.

That light-handed, urbane, and successful editor and poet, Nathaniel Parker Willis, long an active and entertaining figure in the New York of the Thirties and Forties, barely touches the Knickerbocker town of the Twenties. In the spring of 1829 he started the "American Monthly Magazine" in Boston—a periodical described at a later day by that well-known wit, "Tom" Appleton, as "a slim monthly,

written chiefly by himself, but with the true magazine flavor." Willis had been less than two years out of college and was without means or experience, and his enterprise had a fine air of audacity. Events showed that as a venture it was magnificent, but it was not war! At the end of two years the magazine was moved to New York and merged in "The Mirror," a journal founded in 1823 by George P. Morris and Samuel Woodworth; was published every Saturday; and had a long and vigorous life under a succession of names. Woodworth, who wrote a song which was sung at supper-tables many years afterward—"The Old Oaken Bucket"—inspired, it is said, by a eulogy on spring water pronounced at a wine party at Mallory's, a popular hotel of the time,—had withdrawn from "The

Mirror" before Willis joined its editorial staff; but Willis and Morris remained partners and devoted friends to the end. They both became immensely popular—Willis through his versatility and sentiment, Morris through a series of songs which went to the hearts of a host of people: "Woodman, Spare that Tree," "Near the Lake where droops the Lily," and "My Mother's Bible." He was one of the earliest collators of literature for general reading, and his "Song Writers of America" and "The Prose and Poetry of America"—the latter edited in collaboration with Willis—were eminently useful compilations. He had the rare good luck to write a successful play founded on Revolutionary events, and a libretto for an opera; but his talent and fortune lay in his skill in giving popular sentiment expression

in songs. General Wilson records, as the most impressive evidence of his popularity, that he could at any time exchange an unread song for a check for fifty dollars. Genial in manner and with an agreeable address, Morris was also a shrewd man of affairs.

A vigorous, burly man, often met on the streets in the second decade, was on his way to become one of the most widely known Americans, whose name is now familiar throughout Europe. "The Spy" appeared in 1821, and a few months later passed into a second edition and was dramatized. In the following year it was published in England, and the English newspapers began to speak of its author as a "distinguished American novelist." The story speedily became the foundation for a world-wide literary reputation which has suffered little at

the hands of time; the boys in small German towns still organize themselves into tribes of "Cooper Indians" and perform heroic feats after the manner of the "Leather-Stocking Tales," which confirmed and broadened the fame established by "The Spy."

James Fenimore Cooper was not born in New York and did not share the Knickerbocker tradition, but between 1822, when he became a resident of the metropolis, and 1826, when he went to Europe for a stay of seven years, he wrote three of the most notable of his novels. "The Pioneers" was published in 1823, "The Pilot" in 1824, "The Last of the Mohicans" in 1826. "Lionel Lincoln," which saw the light in 1825, is negligible, from the point of view of literature. In 1823 Cooper was living in Beach Street; after his return

from Europe in 1833, he spent a few winters in the city, but his home was in Cooperstown.

Cooper's reputation, vigorous intellect, and courage of speech made for him warm friends as well as bitter enemies, though the latter were of the period after his return from Europe, when his sharp criticism of American manners and his impatience with provincial standards involved him in long-continued and unhappy controversy. "The Bread and Cheese Club," of which he was the founder, included in its membership men of more than local reputation: Kent, Bryant, Morse, Halleck.

A few days before he sailed for Europe in 1826, the Club gave Cooper a dinner at the City Hotel, at which Chancellor Kent presided, and speeches were made by Governor Clinton, Gen-

eral Scott, and other well-known men, who spoke in enthusiastic terms of the distinction he had brought to the country and the city. Chancellor Kent hailed his "genius, which has rendered our native soil classic ground, and given to our early history the enchantment of fiction."

The high regard in which Cooper was held by the men of Letters in New York, and the relative positions of the American poets of the day in the order of merit, are reflected in Halleck's remark to General Wilson: "Cooper is colonel of the literary regiment; Irving, lieutenant-colonel; Bryant, the major; while Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Dana, and myself may be considered captains." In popular reputation the place assigned to Cooper was not too high, although Halleck put himself too

complacently in the rank of Holmes and Whittier. After his return from Europe in 1833, Cooper spent only a few winters in New York; but the city in which his reputation was born, so to speak, and in which his literary friendships were formed was the scene of the most impressive commemoration of his life and fame. A few months after his death a memorial meeting brought together probably the most distinguished group of men who had appeared at one time in the history of the city. Webster presided with his accustomed dignity, but spoke without his occasional inspiration; while Bryant rose easily to the highest reach of his theme in an address of great beauty and feeling.

William Cullen Bryant came to the city in 1825 still thinking of himself as a lawyer with a strong bent toward

literature, but not yet fully committed to a change of profession. A year earlier he had made a flying visit to the city and been warmly welcomed by Cooper, Halleck, the Sedgwicks, and other well-known people. The appearance of "Thanatopsis" in 1817, and of the memorable "Lines to a Waterfowl" a year later, had put his reputation as a poet on a basis so solid that, while it was greatly broadened as time went on, it did not need to be strengthened. In June, 1825, his name appeared as editor on the title-page of the "New York Review and Athenæum Magazine." Later in the year he read four lectures before the Athenæum Society; and two years later, under the auspices of the recently established National Academy of Design, he talked so well about certain phases of Mythology that he was asked

to repeat the course several successive years. In 1826 he became the New York editor of a periodical which bore the portentous name of "The New York Literary Gazette or American Athenæum," at a salary of five hundred dollars a year. His financial position was precarious and had become desperate when he was invited to join the editorial staff of the "New York Evening Post," a journal always intimately connected with the literary history of the city. As a by-product of his industry, Bryant contributed editorial suggestion and writing to the "Talisman," one of those old-fashioned annuals which grew like mushrooms during the decade which ended in 1830. In the closing year of that decade, having acquired an interest in the "Evening Post," he wrote to R. H. Dana that he had made sure of a

comfortable livelihood: "I do not like politics any better than you do; but they get only my mornings, and you know politics and a bellyful are better than poetry and starvation." Long after the Knickerbocker era had become a tradition, Bryant was reaping the double reward of the poet and journalist, and enjoying well-earned prosperity of hand and heart.

Among the men who found a convenient meeting-place in the shop of Charles Wiley, a well-known publisher of the Knickerbocker period, at the corner of Wall and New Streets, was Richard Henry Dana, whose "Two Years Before the Mast" has been thumbed by many generations of American boys. A Cambridge man, with a Harvard education, Dana breathed another air than that of the metropolis; but for many

years his was a familiar figure in the places where men of literary habit gathered in New York. In the back room of Wiley's shop, familiarly known as the "Den," Dana met Cooper, Halleck, Brevoort, and a genial company who found pleasure in Cooper's somewhat pessimistic talk. It was on Broadway, General Wilson tells us, that the modest author of "The Idle Man" was almost assaulted by an enthusiastic admirer who cried, "Are you the immortal Dana?" lifted the astonished man in his arms, rushed across the street with him, and placed him triumphantly on his own threshold; the author meantime calling out, "Release me from this maniac!" Such lively demonstrations of admiration for men of Letters are no longer seen on Broadway!

Local self-consciousness was already

pronounced in the foremost towns of the country in the third decade of the Nineteenth Century. Boston, New York, Philadelphia, were in the race for the intellectual primacy of the New World, and Richmond and Charleston were not unmindful of their claims upon the homage of the nation. Nearly every State cherished the belief that it contained within its borders a modern Athens which could bravely invite comparison with the ancient capital of Attica. In 1824 Boston was spoken of as "The Literary Emporium," a description which had, unhappily, a suggestion of trade associations. Three years later, Philadelphia, according to a magazine prospectus, had "within herself a larger fund of talent, erudition, and science—larger perhaps than any other city can boast." New York was

not lacking in the audacity which is born of self-confidence. In 1820 an attempt was made to establish in the Knickerbocker town an "American Academy of Languages and Belles-Lettres," which boldly set out to protect the language from "local and foreign corruptions," and to establish a "standard of writing and pronunciation, correct, fixed, and uniform, throughout our extensive territory." To allay the apprehensions of the Old World, it was announced that no effort would be made "to form an American language." It is painful to record the fact that this modest effort to guard the mother tongue aroused local jealousy and perished at birth. Boston derided it!

But if New York failed to make itself the seat of an academy, it did not fail to foster the infant industry of journal-

ism. Professor Cairns enumerates no less than thirty periodicals of various kinds established in the city between 1816 and 1833. These were all modest enterprises, and of brief and varied careers. The scale of expenditure must fill the editors of magazines to-day with bitter regret for the conditions of the good old times. In 1822 the publishers of the "Atlantic Magazine," issued in New York, paid its editor five hundred dollars a year, and authorized an expenditure of the same amount for the conduct of the magazine!

There were many lesser writers and men of cultivated taste in literature and art in the closing years of the Knickerbocker period, who formed a congenial society in the growing city, and, in some cases, made important contributions to the scholarship of their time

and secured local reputation and influence.

Gulian Crommelin Verplanck was a fine type of the old-time gentleman of colonial descent. After his graduation from Columbia College he studied law, made the "grand tour," which was not only a part of a liberal education in those days but an enterprise of an adventurous character, returned to become a dignified professor in what is now the General Theological Seminary, spent eight years in Congress, and for nearly fifty years was Vice-Chancellor of the State University. He had a happy faculty of dignified address on public occasions, was a contributor to the "Talisman" with Bryant, edited an illustrated edition of Shakespeare, and appears to have been regarded by the gay spirits of Cockloft Hall as a per-

son not quite of their kind. Older men, however, held him in great esteem, Bryant reports, as "an example of steady, studious, and spotless youth." His protest against Irving's presentation of the founders of Manhattan would seem to indicate that his sense of humor was not always keen.

Frederick S. Cozzens, whose "Sparrowgrass Papers" later achieved a brilliant local reputation, has left a characterization of Dr. John Wakefield Francis, a physician of considerable professional distinction, strong literary interests, and much given to hospitality, which stands in no need of amplification: "The Doctor is one of our old Knickerbockers. His big, bushy head is as familiar as the City Hall. He belongs to the 'God bless you, my dear young friend' school. He is as full of

knowledge as an egg is full of meat. He knows more about China than the Emperor of the Celestial Empire."

A fleeting figure in the Knickerbocker town was the author of "Home, Sweet Home," a song of such popularity that Foster's songs are its only rivals. It was one of the ironies of life that John Howard Payne should spend his days in exile and die beyond the seas. He was born at No. 33 Pearl Street in 1791, became a clerk in a counting-room at fourteen, and a semi-professional editor while in his teens; though his connection with the "Thespian Mirror," a local journal devoted to the drama, was kept secret. He spent two terms in Union College, but the stage was calling him, and in 1809—a year memorable for the extraordinary number of men of genius it brought to birth

—he played the once popular part of *Young Norval* on the boards of the Park Theatre. Three years later he was playing with moderate success in English theatres, and a little later adapting and writing plays in Paris, drawing his material chiefly from French sources. The song which was to give him a world-wide reputation was written in a room in the Palais Royal for his play, "Clari; or, The Maid of Milan." He died at Tunis in 1852, and thirty years later "Home, Sweet Home" was sung by a host of people gathered in Washington about the grave in which his body was reinterred. Payne had talents of an uncommon order; men of the quality and distinction of Talma, Coleridge, and Lamb were warmly attached to him; his work was rewarded with generous returns in money; but he was always in

financial straits and seems to have lacked the happy faculty of making himself at home in the world.

Other men less fugitive than Payne, though of purely local fame, contributed to the good-fellowship of the later Knickerbocker period. Charles P. Clinch wrote plays, poems, and criticisms; held public office; and became the devoted friend of Halleck and Drake. "The Spy," "The First of May," "The Expelled Collegians," and an address prepared for the opening of the Park Theatre, testify to his industry, but failed to give his reputation more than local and passing importance.

The informal fellowship of the early Knickerbockers gave way to the earliest literary and artistic clubs. Of one of the earliest of these Robert Charles Sands was a member. The "Sketch Club"

included Bryant, Halleck, Verplanck, Cole, Ingham, Durand, Weir, and other practitioners of the arts. The "Century Association," which has been intimately associated with the literary, artistic, and professional life of New York, was organized at a meeting of the "Sketch Club" in 1847. Sands was a poet and journalist, a warm-hearted, kindly humorist. A more vigorous personality was William Leggett, who began his professional life in the navy, while still a young man published a volume of poems in New York, wrote with great ardor for the periodicals of the day, and finally became one of the editors of the "Evening Post." He was a man of the old-time belligerent type, and fought a duel of much local notoriety at Weehawken, where the most famous and tragic duel ever fought on

American soil had taken place in 1804.

The most popular member of the later Knickerbocker group was Charles Fenno Hoffman, who had a happy faculty of song and verse writing. The lasting popularity of "Sparkling and Bright" needs no explanation; while the verses on the battle of Monterey have a ring of genuine emotion and a force of spirited action which carry them in spite of awkward lines:

> We were not many—we who stood
> Before the iron sleet that day;
> Yet many a gallant spirit would
> Give half his years if but he could
> Have been with us at Monterey.

Hoffman was connected editorially with the "New York American" and was one of the founders of the "Knickerbocker Magazine," which was born in the after-

glow of the Knickerbocker period and continued the Knickerbocker tradition, though its scope gave it national importance. His editorial duties left Hoffman an ample margin of time for lyrical work, and his short poems of singing quality, "The Myrtle and Steel," "Room, Boys, Room," "'Tis Hard to Share her Smiles with Many," were sung, hummed, and whistled in many parts of the country. His "Winter in the West," made up of a series of letters, was one of the early reports of adventure and incident on the frontier.

Albany was, after New York, the chief centre of the Dutch tradition, and had a very hospitable and delightful society intimately connected with its kin city at the mouth of the Hudson. From Albany, at short intervals, came Alfred Billings Street. He was always welcome

in New York, where his somewhat prolific verse was held in great esteem. He was a devout student of Nature, and had a happy command of the descriptive phrase, and his contemporaries among the American poets were generous in their estimates of the excellence of his poetry. Longfellow gave him the first place as a reporter of forest scenery, and Bryant was "impressed with the fidelity and vividness of the images newly drawn from Nature."

Among the scholarly writers of the later time was Henry Theodore Tuckerman, whose name has a colonial flavor in the mind of the New Yorker of to-day. He brought the name here from Boston in the afterglow of the Knickerbocker age, spent many years in Europe, and became the most accomplished of the early American writers in the field of

art. He was a man of wide reading, with a charm of manner which won him an enviable popularity in the social life of New York and Newport, and with the catholicity of interests and tastes which mark the cosmopolitan temper. Evert Augustus Duyckinck, on the other hand, was a son of the soil and an inheritor of the tradition, though he was born too late to be counted among the Knickerbocker writers. In 1830, when the Knickerbocker age reached its end and the mid-century writers began to appear, Duyckinck was preparing for Columbia College, and it was not until 1840, on his return from an extended visit in Europe, that he began a long and industrious career as an editor and writer. His chief claim on the attention of lovers of old New York rests on his service as a literary historian. His

"Cyclopædia of American Literature," his text for the "National Portrait Gallery of Eminent Americans," and his "Memorial of Fitz-Greene Halleck" are valuable records of the early men of Letters in this country, with many of whom he was personally associated.

Edgar Allan Poe came to New York in the later Thirties, and made and lost friends as in every place where he tried, with pathetic hopefulness, to find anchorage. His attitude toward the Knickerbocker group was one of mingled condescension and contempt. In any society he would have been a detached and lonely figure, and the lasting memorial of his ill-starred genius and broken career in New York is the cottage at Fordham in which Virginia Poe died.

These variously gifted men found the

remuneration of literary work far too meagre for "human nature's daily food," and took refuge in business occupations of various kinds. Halleck was an expert accountant fortunate in his connection with Mr. Astor, while Drake studied medicine and, after the custom of many old-time physicians, had an interest in a drug-store. Clinch was in the employment of a ship-builder, and for nearly two generations was Deputy Collector of the Port of New York; Payne began his career as a clerk; and Sprague was a bank cashier. Irving and Cooper were amply rewarded by a public to which they offered the novelty of original American literature; Bryant found ease and a comfortable fortune in journalism. In 1822, Professor Cairns reminds us, he set a price on his shorter poems which could hardly

be regarded as exorbitant—two dollars each. George P. Morris was more fortunate so far as income was concerned, and reached such an altitude of popularity that he could sell a song unread for fifty dollars, while a very unimportant drama from his hand brought him thirty-five hundred dollars. Then, as now, journalism was a refuge from the inadequate rewards of literature; though it must be frankly conceded that, while much of the work of the lesser Knickerbocker writing had a pleasant humor, a delightful gaiety of mood or lightness of style, it was neither vital nor original, and its appeal was limited to a small group of readers.

In the later years of his life, Irving was in the habit of speaking of "Salmagundi" as light and trivial; an overflow of youthful fun and audacity. Mr.

Barrett Wendell is of opinion that the "literature of Brockden Brown, of Irving, of Cooper, and of Poe is only a literature of pleasure, possessing, so far as it has excellence at all, only the excellence of conscientious refinement"; and that nothing in it "touched seriously on either God's eternities, or the practical conduct of life in the United States." This is an incidentally happy characterization of the Knickerbocker literature: it was a literature of pleasure, and it was delightfully free from the didactic and sermonic note at a time when, Lowell declared, all New England was a pulpit. Its touch on morals and manners was light, satiric, and amusing; in its way it had the tone of the world of society rather than of theology or reform. Its preaching, like that of Addison and Steele, was lightly winged

and phrased in the language of an easy, cordial society; tolerant in opinion, hospitable to differences of religion and political habit, concerned chiefly to make itself agreeable and the time of its sojourn in the vale of tears pleasantly profitable. New York was not indifferent to the religious side of life, but its preaching was reserved for churches; its literature, though somewhat provincial in time and manner, was kept well within the ancient province of art.

In 1858 the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of "The Knickerbocker Magazine" was commemorated by the publication of "The Knickerbocker Gallery," a volume of portentous size and effusive elegance, made up of articles written by contributors to the magazine. Fifty-four men are represented in the collection, of whom only

four belonged to the early and characteristic Knickerbocker period. Irving drew upon a commonplace-book of a date thirty-five years earlier for a few notes; Bryant and Halleck were among the poets of the collection; John W. Francis and Alfred B. Street were familiar names to the old New Yorkers of that day. A new generation was in possession of the stage, however; and the Old Town, with its Dutch traditions, was slowly losing its outlines in the neighborly city of the years between 1830 and 1880, as that in turn is fast being obliterated by the cosmopolitan city of to-day.

The old places have vanished, and the old faces are remembered to-day only by the aid of a few portraits. The names of the streets in the lower section of the modern city recall men and women

whose genial hospitality set a fashion which has never gone out in New York, though the guests of the city have become so many that hotels of imposing size and oppressive splendor are taxed to provide them shelter. But behind the tumult of the great tides of life which flow through the thoroughfares there is a silent New York, which is unspoiled by the possession of wealth, and which hears the appeals of the unfortunate within its borders, and gives time and work and money with tireless generosity of heart and hand.

There was a charm about the Old Town which depended largely on neighborliness and the narrower interests which thrive in a small and homogeneous community; the charm of ease and of leisure and a certain contentment with life; of the ripeness of temper and of

mind which is the fine flowering of an education based on the humanities; of room for work and pleasure large enough for fame, but not too large for the nearer satisfactions of local celebrity. It was the good fortune of the early Knickerbocker writers, by temperament and taste, instinctively to adapt their gifts to their time and Town; and it was the good fortune of the Town to be the birthplace of American literature, and the home of two writers who were first to give that literature a place in the interest of the world.